

Paul's Day in Court (Again) - Acts 25:23-26:32

Introduction

Roman Governor Festus arrives at his new assignment in Caesarea and discovers a man in his prison named Paul. The religious leaders of Jerusalem are determined to see this man executed, but have been unsuccessful to this point in prying him out from Roman protection, as this Paul is a Roman citizen. Festus goes to Jerusalem but finds no real answers. He holds a trial in Caesarea and finds the prisoner is not guilty of any crimes deserving death under Roman law. But the prisoner has appealed to Caesar, which is his right, and Festus will soon send him towards Rome.

But before Paul is sent away Agrippa and Bernice arrive to congratulate Festus, and Festus sees this as an opportunity to clarify why the Jews are so upset at this Paul. Agrippa is Rome's appointed head over the religious system of Jerusalem. He should be a great help in sorting out why the Jews are so upset at Paul. So a time is set for Paul to stand before Agrippa and Bernice. Paul now has an opportunity to stand before a king – true, a puppet king – just as prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 10:18. This study will look at that encounter – Paul, child of the King of Kings before Herod Agrippa, a king of this world.

Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice – Acts 25:23-27

1. Describe the entrance of Agrippa and Bernice to Festus' hall? (v. 23) Who is with them?
2. Describe the entrance of Paul into the hall of Festus. (v. 23) Despite appearances to the contrary, who is the real dignitary here? Why? (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20)
3. How does Festus dramatize this event in verse 24? (How does he exaggerate the truth?)

4. What startling confession does Festus make in verse 25? How does this compare to what happened to Jesus? (cf. John 19:4)
5. What, according to verse 26, is Festus' true agenda in holding this hearing before Agrippa?

Paul's Defense – Acts 26:1-29

Paul's Introduction of Himself – Acts 26:1-11

6. Why does Paul consider himself fortunate according to verses 2 and 3? In this context why was this important?
7. Since Festus has claimed that "the whole Jewish people petitioned him" for the death of Paul, who does Paul say can attest to his life as a Pharisee? (v. 4)
8. What does Paul say has landed him in this place of arrest (vss. 6-7)? Earlier he says it was for his hope in the resurrection (23:6). Is there a difference?
9. In verse 8 Paul brings us back to a key message of the Gospel. What is it?
10. What was Paul's initial response to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (vss.9-11)? How extensive were his efforts?

Paul's Conversion – Acts 26:12-18

11. Under whose authority was Paul traveling when he went to Damascus (v. 12)? What was their opinion of him now?
12. Verse 13 describes Paul's encounter with Jesus. Why is Jesus revealed in this manner?

13. What question does Jesus ask Paul according to verse 14? What does it mean, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads”?
14. A Paul (Saul) persecuted the church, who was he ultimately persecuting (v. 15)? Paul asks, “Who are you Lord?” which is to say, “Who are you God?” the response he hears leaves him one conclusion. What was it?
15. Jesus tells Paul why he has appeared before him. What is Paul’s purpose according to verse 16-18? The message Paul would deliver includes a promise for those who put their faith in Jesus. What is that promise (cf. v. 18)?

Paul’s Response to the Vision and Call – Acts 26:19-23

16. How did Paul respond to his heavenly vision (v. 19)? Where did this take him (v. 20)? What message did he take to the people (v. 20)? Why is repentance almost always associated with salvation in the book of Acts (and the NT in general)?
17. Why, according to Paul, was he seized in the temple and an attempt was made on his life (v. 21)
18. Does Paul feel God has abandoned him as he stands as a prisoner before Agrippa (cf. v. 22)? What is the purpose of his imprisonment?
19. What does Paul say the prophets and Moses foretold and he now proclaimed? (vss. 22-23)
20. What word is used to describe “salvation” in verse 23? How does this fit Paul’s story so well?

Festus Interrupts – Acts 26:24-29

21. Festus interrupts the proceedings and accuses Paul of something. What is it (vs. 24)? Why?

22. What is Paul's defense (vss. 25-26)? Why does Paul turn the attention to Agrippa (the king) instead of Festus? What does Paul assert about Agrippa's knowledge of what happened with Jesus and even Paul?

23. How does Paul put Agrippa on the spot in verse 27?

24. How does Agrippa respond (v. 28)?

25. Paul now reveals his intentions. What are they (v. 29)?

The Verdict – Acts 26:30-32

26. The hearing comes to an abrupt halt. What conclusion do they come to about Paul (vs. 31)? Why is he not released (v. 32)?

Conclusion:

"The literal meaning of v. 28 is, "With but a little will you persuade me to be a Christian?" There is no evidence of conviction here, and Agrippa is using the word "Christian" as a term of contempt. "It will take more than this to make a Jew like me into one of those hated Christians!" is the idea behind his response.

But Paul used this remark as the basis for a passionate appeal in v. 29, pleading with the royal assembly to trust in Jesus Christ. Sad to say, there are two kinds of people—"almost Christians" and "altogether Christians." Agrippa was an "almost Christian"—he understood the Word, heard the truth, but refused to do anything about it. His intellect was instructed, his emotions touched, but his will was unyielding."¹

Almost a Christian. Almost persuaded. An old hymn ends with these sad words: "Almost cannot avail; almost is but to fail! Sad, sad, that bitter wail, "Almost," but lost.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament*](#) (p. 351). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.